

**CONGRESSMAN SHERWOOD BOEHLERT (R-NY)**  
**OPENING STATEMENT FOR NPOESS NUNN-MCCURDY HEARING**  
**June 8, 2006**

I want to welcome everyone to this extraordinarily important hearing at which we will begin to figure out how to move ahead with the NPOESS program.

I underscore “begin to figure out” because we’ve just this week received the results of the Nunn-McCurdy review, and we necessarily can only begin to raise questions about the revised NPOESS proposal today. But I thought it was vital that this Committee immediately begin asking questions and laying out concerns, given the troubled history of the program.

So far there’s only one thing we know with certainty, and that’s that the success of NPOESS is critically important for both military and civilian weather forecasting, which is to say for both national security and for public health and safety. We have to make this work. NPOESS stands for National Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite System, and at some point that word “Operational” has to mean more than adding a vowel to the acronym.

So what do we need to know for this program to move ahead? I’d start by saying that the Nunn-McCurdy review was a serious, tri-agency undertaking that has put forward a plausible plan. But we need more information to move from “plausible” to “credible” to “persuasive.” And the burden of proof is on the agencies. We need to be convinced that these cost and schedule estimates are more reliable than all of those we have received in the past, and that they include adequate reserves and schedule margins.

We also need to be convinced that the proposed configuration of satellites is the best way to meet U.S. weather and climate needs – that now that we're finally cost conscious, we're not recklessly throwing sensors, especially climate sensors, overboard to save relatively small amounts of money. And we need to be sure that this configuration represents the best arrangement for the public, not the least common denominator of bureaucratic infighting.

Let me very clear that this Committee is not going to be able to be convinced of anything unless we have the documents we need and the discussions we need to evaluate for ourselves the way costs and schedules were estimated and decisions were made. So far, the Department of Defense, which controls the Nunn-McCurdy documents, has not exactly been a model of cooperation.

We requested some pretty basic documents on Tuesday afternoon, and we finally received some of them a little while before the hearing, and then only because Commerce Department and NOAA officials kept hammering away on our behalf, which I appreciate.

I don't know how we're supposed to do our jobs on behalf of the public if we can't see how decisions were made. We need to be able to judge the validity of the \$11.5 billion price tag for this program and understand what it would cost to do more or less than has been proposed. For an agency whose previous cost estimates have been off by more than 66 percent to tell us "trust us" is preposterous, and we will not stand for it. We will make sure we get what we need to oversee this program.

In the meantime, work on NPOESS instruments and the preliminary satellite, NPP, is continuing, and apparently has been going relatively smoothly.

Management changes are beginning to be instituted, as we called for at our last hearing, echoing the Inspector General. And the contract with the prime contractor, Northrop Grumman, will be renegotiated to, among other things, put in place a more defensible award regime. And the contractor, for the first time, received no award fees for the most recent period. A new program office has been established and seems to be well staffed.

So I am hopeful that NPOESS will be able to move ahead more steadily from here on out. But for that to happen, Congress and the Administration will need to work together to keep each other informed about this program. That has to start with determining if this scaled back, but more expensive version of NPOESS is the way to move forward – it very well may be, but we can't take that on faith.

So I'll end where I began. We have to make this work. Too much has been expended to start over from scratch. We have to all work together to ensure that the public has the weather information it has come to expect and depend on, at key times for their very lives.

Mr. Gordon.